

Message Text

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14-11

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01 OMB-01

SAB-01 SCCT-01 ACDA-05 IO-10 /075 W

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P R 141035Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3708

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2236

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, JO, XF

SUBJ: PRESIDENT ASAD'S VISIT TO JORDAN

REF: AMMAN 3908

1. FOLLOWING ASAD'S RETURN TO DAMASCUS, SYRIAN MEDIA HAVE CONTINUED TO GIVE TOP HEADLINES TO SUCCESS OF HIS VISIT AND TO FORGING OF CLOSER UNITY BETWEEN SYRIAN AND JORDAN. COLUMNIST IN JUNE 13 AL-BAATH SAW JOINT STATEMENT AS REFLECTION OF MASS POPULAR WILL DEMANDING "ONE PEOPLE...ONE ARMY." HE ADDED THAT NEW JORDANIAN-SYRIAN COORDINATION OPENED NEW HORIZONS FOR UNIFYING EASTERN FRONT COMPRISING SYRIA, JORDAN AND PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE. WRITER IN JUNE 14 AL-THAWRAH ASSERTED THAT JORDAN AND SYRIA TOGETHER NOW CONSTITUTE ELEMENT WHICH ISRAEL CANNOT IGNORE OR UNDERRATE. ISRAEL WOULD HAVE TO RE-EVALUATE ITS POSITION IN LIGHT THIS
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NEW STRENGTH. THIS SHOULD ENCOURAGE ARABS TO GREATER

COOPERATION AND SOLIDARITY, COLUMNIST CONCLUDED.

2. DESPITE THIS FANFARE, OUR INITIAL IMPRESSION IS THAT JOINT STATEMENT REPRESENTED LEAST TO BE EXPECTED FROM JORDAN GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES OF VISIT, BUT STILL SUBSTANTIAL BENEFITS FOR SYRIA WERE ACHIEVED. IN FIRST VISIT OF SYRIAN HEAD OF STATE TO JORDAN SINCE SHUKRY QUWATLY IN 1956, ASAD CERTAINLY WANTED TO DEMONSTRATE SYRIAN DESIRE FOR BROADER AND STRONGER WEB OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH JORDAN THAN IN PAST. HE WANTED TO DIMINISH RESIDUE OF SUSPICION IN JORDAN TOWARD SYRIA AND SYRIAN BAATH PARTY. AND CONSCIOUS OF RECENT IRAQI WOOING OF JORDAN, HE WANTED TO PREVENT A POLITICAL OUT-FLANKING MOVE BY IRAQ WHICH MIGHT TEND TO ISOLATE SYRIA IN CONTEXT OF CURRENT SYRIAN-IRAQI DISPUTE. THE VISIT AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ONGOING SUPREME JOINT COMMITTEE APPEAR TO HAVE ACCOMPLISHED THESE GOALS.

3. IN OUR VIEW, ASAD PROBABLY REALIZED THAT MORE SPECIFIC SYRIAN OBJECTIVES, SUCH AS ESTABLISHING EFFECTIVE JORDANIAN-SYRIAN MILITARY COOPERATION AND RECONCILING HUSSEIN AND PLO WERE NOT REALISTIC AT THIS TIME THOUGH SOME GROUNDWORK MAY HAVE BEEN LAID. IT IS TRUE THAT SYRIA IS CONCERNED MILITARILY WITH STRENGTHENING ITS FLANKS AND OVER THE LONGER TERM WITH MAKING POSSIBLE ISRAELI USE OF JORDANIAN LAND AND AIRSPACE IN ANY FUTURE CONFRONTATION HARDER AND MORE COSTLY. ASAD WOULD OF COURSE LIKE TO HAVE JORDANIANS IN POSITION WHERE THEY COULD NOT STAY OUT OF ANOTHER WAR. WE HAVE NO INFORMATION, HOWEVER, AS TO WHAT SPECIFIC ACTIONS HE MAY HAVE PROPOSED TO JORDANIANS.

4. ON POLITICAL LEVEL, VISIT CAN BE SEEN AS ADVANCING ASAD'S POLICY OF COOPERATION AND CO-EXISTENCE WITH CONSERVATIVE ARAB REGIMES, A POLICY WHICH HIS VISIT TO LEBANON EARLIER THIS YEAR ALSO SERVED TO PROMOTE. MORE IMMEDIATELY, IT MAY HAVE HELPED TO SOME EXTENT IN RESURRECTING IMAGE OF AN EASTERN FRONT COMMAND, AN OBJECTIVE WHICH SYRIANS HAVE ALREADY BEEN PURSUING WITH PLO FOR SOME MONTHS, BOTH FOR ITS OWN SAKE AND IN ORDER TO HELP ASSURE THAT SYRIA AND PALESTINIANS CANNOT BE IGNORED IN ANY FUTURE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, PALESTINIANS, CHIEF OF STATE VISITS, PEACE PLANS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 JUN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975DAMASC02236
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750208-0377
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750648/aaaabrln.tel
Line Count: 109
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 AMMAN 3908
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01 AUG 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <26 NOV 2003 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENT ASAD'S VISIT TO JORDAN
TAGS: PFOR, SY, JO, XF, (ASAD, HAFIZ)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006